

Trafficking in Persons Report -[Report Home Page](#)

Released by the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons
June 5, 2006

THE PHILIPPINES (TIER 2)

The Philippines is a source, transit, and destination country for men, women, and children trafficked for the purposes of sexual exploitation and forced labor. A significant share of the over one million Philippine men and women who go overseas each year to work as domestic servants or in the construction and garment industries are subjected to conditions of involuntary servitude. Women are often lured abroad with false promises of legitimate employment and are trafficked to destinations throughout Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Europe, and North America. A large percentage of the Philippine women who migrate legally to Japan as overseas performing artists are believed to have been trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation. To a lesser extent, the Philippines is a transit point and destination for women from the P.R.C. who are trafficked for sexual exploitation. There is substantial internal trafficking within the Philippines, primarily from rural to urban metropolitan areas, and sexual exploitation of children. Endemic poverty, a high unemployment rate, a cultural propensity toward migration, a weak rule-of-law environment, and sex tourism all contribute to significant trafficking activity in the Philippines.

The Government of the Philippines does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking; however, it is making significant efforts to do so. Over the last year, the Philippine Government stepped up efforts to implement its anti-trafficking law and made initial progress in implementing strategies to combat trafficking in persons, particularly in prosecuting human traffickers. Following the imposition by the Japanese government of stricter requirements for entertainer visas, the number of Japanese entertainer visas given to Philippine women has dropped by almost half in 2005 as compared to 2004. Government action should focus on prosecuting and convicting traffickers and public officials involved in trafficking.

The Philippine Government made discernible progress in its anti-trafficking law enforcement efforts in 2005. In particular, the government made progress in prosecuting human traffickers. During the last year, 67 cases were under preliminary investigation and another 31 cases were filed for prosecution under the 2003 anti-trafficking law. Of those, two cases resulted in the conviction of four individuals for trafficking offenses, with courts handing down life imprisonment sentences to the traffickers and awarding compensation to the victims. There were two additional cases that led to convictions under the 2003 anti-trafficking law, but the alleged traffickers pled guilty to a lesser offense under that law – an offense that does not constitute trafficking – and were sentenced to six months of community service and a fine instead of imprisonment. The Philippine Department of Justice tripled the number of prosecutors at the national level handling trafficking cases and assigned additional prosecutors at the regional level to focus on trafficking cases, resulting in a four-fold increase in the number of investigative cases presented for prosecution under the 2003 anti-trafficking law. The Philippine Secretary of Justice also issued a directive ordering all prosecutors to give preferential attention to trafficking cases and to oppose and object to any motions for dismissal due to lack of testimony by witnesses in trafficking cases or where the defendant had made a financial settlement with the victim or other family members. Corruption and a weak judiciary remain serious impediments to the effective prosecution of traffickers. Despite widespread reports of law enforcement officials' complicity in trafficking, the government prosecuted only one such official. The Philippine Government continued to sponsor training programs for police and prosecutors to help them pursue cases more effectively under the 2003 anti-trafficking law.

During the reporting period, the Philippine Government continued to sponsor impressive protection efforts for trafficking victims. The government's witness protection program, however, lacks the budget to accommodate the large number of trafficking victims. The anti-trafficking law passed in 2003 affords trafficked persons rights as victims and protects them from legal punishment. The government established arrangements with NGOs and Philippines embassies in destination countries to provide overseas workers who had been exploited with temporary shelter, counseling, and medical assistance. It also continued to provide a range of protective services to trafficking victims, including temporary residency status, relief from deportation, shelter, and access to legal, medical, and counseling services. The Philippine Government continued to promote training programs for law enforcement and immigration officials on methods of dealing with victims.

Efforts to raise awareness of trafficking continued in the Philippines with senior government officials frequently speaking out about the dangers of trafficking. Fourteen government agencies also coordinate the Philippine Government's anti-trafficking efforts, much of which is prevention-oriented. The Philippines has a national action plan to address trafficking in persons.